

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 33. (cancelled).

34. (currently amended) Panels having surfaces for extending along a common surface plane and coupling elements comprising a first coupling element and a secondary coupling element arranged to connect first and second panels at a common joint with a form-fit connection that simultaneously secures the panels together to prevent unintentional separation in a first direction perpendicular to the common joint, a second direction perpendicular to the common surface plane and a third direction extending along the common joint, said first and second panels being connected in said second direction by said first coupling element and in said first and third directions by said secondary coupling element, said secondary coupling element including relatively movable portions compressible only in said third direction to connect and disconnect said first and second panels in said first and third directions.

35. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said secondary coupling element has a flat

~~configuration first and second panels are formed entirely or predominately of wood and/or a wooden material.~~

36. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said first and second panels are formed entirely or predominately of wood and/or a wooden material ~~secondary coupling element is formed of a different material than the panels.~~

37. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said secondary coupling element is separable from the panels and said first coupling element includes horizontal contact surfaces that secure said first and second panels in said second direction.

38. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said coupling elements include first vertical contact surfaces that secure said first and second panels in said first direction.

39. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 38, wherein said coupling elements include second vertical contact surfaces that secure said first and second panels in said third direction.

40. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 37, wherein said horizontal contact surfaces are provided by a tongue and groove connection, said tongue has a tongue thickness extending in said second direction and a recess for receiving said secondary coupling element, and said secondary coupling element has a flat configuration in said first and third directions and a coupling thickness in said second direction substantially equal to said tongue thickness, said secondary coupling element extending in said recess between said first and second panels.

41. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 37, wherein said secondary coupling element is held in a recess in said horizontal contact surfaces.

42. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 41, wherein said secondary coupling element is held in said recess in a press-fit connection.

43. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 41, wherein said secondary coupling element is held in said recess in a form-fit connection.

44. (cancelled).

45. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said secondary coupling element is a separate coupling element having a horizontally flat configuration in said first and third directions, and said first and second coupling elements have substantially equal thicknesses extending in said second direction.

46. (currently amended) Panels according to claim ~~45~~ 34, wherein said secondary coupling element ~~includes~~ is a separate coupling element and said relatively movable portions ~~having~~ have a normal position and said secondary coupling element is formed of a material having a larger restoring force for returning said relatively movable portions to said normal position than the restoring force resulting if the secondary coupling element was formed of the material forming the panels.

47. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 46, wherein said secondary coupling element relatively movable portions may be compressed in said third direction against said restoring force.

48. (currently amended) Panels according to claim ~~47~~ 40, wherein said secondary coupling element is inserted into said recess with said relatively movable portions compressed together and cannot be withdrawn from

said recess unless the relatively movable portions are compressed together.

49. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 48, wherein said recess includes an undercutting having undercut locking surfaces, said secondary coupling element includes secondary locking surfaces arranged to lock with said undercut locking surfaces when said secondary coupling element is inserted into said recess so that said secondary coupling element is locked in said first direction and prevented from being withdrawn from said recess.

50. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 49, wherein said undercut locking surfaces and said secondary locking surfaces are chamfered to cause said secondary coupling element to be drawn into said recess.

51. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 49, wherein said recess includes a recess wall opposed from said undercutting and extending in said second direction, said recess wall limiting further movement of said secondary coupling element in said first direction after said locking surfaces are locked.

52. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 41, wherein said secondary coupling element has a horizontally extending flat configuration, size substantially corresponding with that of said recess in said horizontal contact surfaces, and said secondary coupling element extends in said recess only in a plane that is parallel to said common surface plane of said panels.

53. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 52, wherein said secondary coupling element has an H-shape.

54. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 41, wherein said secondary coupling element has a horizontally flat configuration and includes two substantially parallel extending arms terminating at free ends that can be moved in a resilient manner relative to one another.

55. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 54, wherein said secondary coupling element and said recess are constructed so that said secondary coupling element may be introduced into said recess in only one direction parallel to said common surface plane of said panels.

56. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 55, wherein said secondary coupling element includes locking surfaces at said free ends of said arms for engaging said undercutting.

57. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 56, wherein said free ends of said arms include a taper, and said free ends are temporarily pressed against their own restoring force in order to introduce said secondary coupling element into said recess.

58. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 57, wherein said recess is shaped so that it can be formed by milling with a stepped-milling head moved in said first, second and third directions to provide an opening in the lower side of said first and second panels, said free ends of said arms being accessible through said opening for pressing together to disconnect said first and second panels.

59. (currently amended) Panels having surfaces for extending along a common surface plane and coupling elements comprising a first coupling element and a secondary coupling element arranged to connect first and second panels at a common joint with a form-fit connection that simultaneously secures the panels

together to prevent unintentional separation in a first direction perpendicular to the common joint, a second direction perpendicular to the common surface plane and a third direction extending along the common joint, said first and second panels being connected in said second direction by said first coupling element and in said first and third directions by said secondary coupling element, said secondary coupling element including relatively movable portions compressible in said third direction to connect and disconnect said first and second panels in said first and third directions, said secondary coupling element having a flat configuration in said first and third directions according to claim 34, wherein at least one of said first and second panels includes a carrier board consisting of a HDF or MDF.

60. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 59, wherein said first and second coupling elements each have width and length dimensions extending in said first and third directions and each have substantially equal thickness dimensions extending in said second direction, and said thickness dimensions are less than said width and length dimensions 34, ~~wherein at least one of said first and second panels includes a decorated paper or a decoration provided on said surfaces for extending along said common surface plane.~~

61. (currently amended) Panels having surfaces for extending along a common surface plane and coupling elements comprising a first coupling element and a secondary coupling element arranged to connect first and second panels at a common joint with a form-fit connection that simultaneously secures the panels together to prevent unintentional separation in a first direction perpendicular to the common joint, a second direction perpendicular to the common surface plane and a third direction extending along the common joint, said first and second panels being connected in said second direction by said first coupling element and in said first and third directions by said secondary coupling element, said secondary coupling element including relatively movable portions compressible in said third direction to connect and disconnect said first and second panels in said first and third directions, said first and secondary coupling elements having substantially equal thicknesses extending in said second direction according to claim 34, wherein at least one of said first and second panels includes a carrier board having several papers compressed together and an amino-plastic thermo-hardening resin.

62. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said first and second panels include opposed

longitudinal sides to provide a common connecting joint and opposed narrow sides, said coupling elements are provided on one or both of said narrow sides, and said panels are constructed on said longitudinal sides so that said panels may be connected by a rotary movement about ~~their~~ the common connecting joint.

63. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said first and second panels include opposed longitudinal sides and opposed narrow sides, said coupling elements are provided on one or both of said narrow sides, and said panels are constructed on said longitudinal sides so that said panels may be connected at the longitudinal sides by a horizontal movement towards one another.

64. (currently amended) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said first and second panels include opposed longitudinal sides and opposed narrow sides, said coupling elements are provided on one or both of said narrow sides, and said panels are constructed on said longitudinal sides so that said panels may be connected by displacement in one plane and/or by vertically lowering said first panel relative to said second panel.

65. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 34, wherein said panels have a rectangular or square configuration, a thickness in the range of from about 6 mm to about 15 mm and an edge dimension in the range of from about 100 mm to about 2000 mm.

66. (previously presented) A floor covering comprising panels according to claim 34.